

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6520

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 5010

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, CY, GR, TU, TS

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA

REF: (A) STATE 174040, (B) STATE 174079, (C) STATE

173831, (D) STATE 167231, (E) STATE 156661

1. SUMMARY: DURING FORTY-MINUTE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AUGUST 10 AMBASSADOR (A) DELIVERED LETTERS FROM FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON AND FROM PRESIDENT FORD; (B) STRESSED CONTINUITY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, INCLUDING CLOSENESS OF U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONSHIP; (C) AND BRIEFED BOURGUIBA ON U.S. EFFORTS RE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE AND RESOLUTION CYPRUS CRISIS. BOURGUIBA PLEASED WITH HIGH-LEVEL MESSAGES AND HAPPY TO HEAR OF NO CHANGE IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, PARTICULARLY RE U.S.-TUNISIAN RELATIONS. HE LISTENED INTENTLY TO BRIEFINGS AND AGREED THAT PALESTINE QUESTION IS TOUGH NUT TO CRACK. SEPARATE CABLE FOLLOWS RE MY IMPRESSION OF BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH. END SUMMARY.

2. IN MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AUGUST 10 I FIRST DELIVERED MESSAGE FROM FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON (STATE 167231) RESPONDING TO EARLIER BOURGUIBA MESSAGE EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR U.S. POSITION ON ISRAELI BOMBINGS IN LEBANON. I STRESSED THAT MESSAGE WAS CONFIDENTIAL, AND POINTED OUT THAT IT HAD BEEN RECEIVED SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE CONFIDENTIAL
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PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION. (DESPITE PRESIDENT NIXON'S DEPARTURE, I FELT THAT IN VIEW OF HIGH REGARD AND

PERSONAL ESTEEM IN WHICH BOURGUIBA HELD NIXON, DELIVERY OF LETTER DURING MY CALL WAS DESIRABLE. (STATE 174313 NOT RPT NOT RECEIVED IN TIME.)

3. I THEN DELIVERED MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT FORD (STATE 174040) WHICH, AS IN CASE NIXON LETTER, BOURGUIBA READ OUT LOUD. BOURGUIBA WAS PLEASED WITH BOTH LETTERS AND EXPRESSED DESIRE TO PUBLISH TEXTS. HE UNDERSTOOD WHEN I CLARIFIED TO HIM THAT TEXTS OF MESSAGES WERE CONFIDENTIAL. (LOCAL PRESS OF AUGUST 11 ACKNOWLEDGED DELIVERY OF PRESIDENT FORD'S MESSAGE AND SAID MERELY THAT MESSAGE INTER ALIA ASSURED BOURGUIBA OF CONTINUITY OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND OF PRESIDENT FORD'S FIRM DETERMINATION TO WORK FOR A JUST AND DURABLE PEACE IN MIDDLE EAST.

4. DRAWING ON STATE 174049, I UNDERLINED PRESIDENT FORD'S UNDERTAKING TO MAINTAIN EXISTING U.S. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND TO CONTINUE PRESIDENT NIXON'S FOREIGN POLICY, INCLUDING RETENTION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER. I EMPHASIZED STRONG BIPARTISAN SUPPORT WHICH PRESIDENT FORD HAS RECEIVED FROM BOTH PARTY LEADERS IN CONGRESS. I ALSO SAID THAT USG CONTINUES TO ATTACH CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE TO ITS LONGSTANDING CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH TUNISIA.

5. PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA LISTENED INTENTLY TO MY BRIEFINGS, PREPARED BY DEPT. (STATE 173831 AND STATE 167231), RE U.S. EFFORTS RE ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE AND RESOLUTION OF CYPRUS CRISIS. OCCASIONALLY HE NODDED HIS HEAD APPROVINGLY AND AFTER I HAD COVERED PORTION ON PALESTINIANS, HE AGREED THAT PALESTINE QUESTION IS GOING TO BE TOUGH NUT TO CRACK.

6. AS I DEPARTED, I LEFT WITH MINISTER-DIRECTOR OF BOURGUIBA'S CABINET COPIES IN FRENCH AND ARABIC OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION STATEMENT.

7. STATE OF BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH REPORTED SEPARATELY.

8. COMMENT: BOURGUIBA WAS LESS LOQUACIOUS THAN USUAL AND MADE NO COMMENT EITHER ON PRESIDENT NIXON'S RESIGNATION
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TION OR PRESIDENT FORD'S APPOINTMENT. HE HAD ALREADY DISPATCHED A CABLE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW PRESIDENT AND NO DOUBT FELT COMMENT ON RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT NIXON, WHO HE HAD REGARDED HIGHLY, WAS NOT IN ORDER. FURTHERMORE, OUR MEETING RAN OVER INTO TIME SCHEDULE FOR ANOTHER GATHERING AND, IN ADDITION, I LEARNED LATER, A TELEPHONE CALL WAS COMING IN FROM KING HASSAN OF MOROCCO ANNOUNCING POSTPONEMENT OF LATTER'S TRIP TO TUNISIA. BOURGUIBA SEEMED PARTICULARLY PLEASED WHEN I SAID THAT TRADITIONALLY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES

REMAINS UNAFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENTS.
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